
Navy Foreign Military Sales (FMS) eBusiness

By

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Naval Inventory Control Point

Introduction

The Department of Defense (DoD) Electronic Commerce/Electronic Business Strategic Plan states:

By 2010, an enterprise-wide electronic environment will exist where best business practices and enabling technologies are used to facilitate the most efficient exchange of the full range of business information resulting in streamlined and rapid response to the warfighter and supporting Defense missions.

Recognizing the need for the FMS customer to interact with the DoD supply system using electronic means, the Naval Inventory Control Point International Programs Director (NAVICP-OF) entered the electronic commerce age with the unveiling of its eBusiness Suite of applications in 1999. The technologies employed are standard tools used within DoD, Navy, and Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP). This will allow eventual full integration with the NAVSUP *One Touch* system. These applications are intended to allow the foreign customer, U.S. Navy program managers, logistics element managers, and country managers direct access to various foreign military sales (FMS) related databases as well as electronic submission of business requests including requisitions for supply requirements. These applications improve business processes while reducing expenses through reduction in processing time and elimination of paper-based systems. The long-term goal of the eBusiness Suite is to provide completely electronic processing of all information, thus reducing processing times, improving feedback, and eliminating the necessity to produce paper. The eBusiness Suite currently contains fifty applications in eleven areas, most developed by the International Programs Directorate.

Applications

The eBusiness Suite was designed for FMS customers' ease of use, and includes security features that ensure that country access is restricted by user identification and password to authorized users. The NAVICP philosophy has been first, to provide the FMS customer with as much access and capability as possible, while protecting country sensitive data; second, to present applications in a concise and clear manner, minimizing the number of screens necessary to maximize information flow; and third, to bring technology to the customers as rapidly as possible to ease their manual processing. The eBusiness Suite of applications includes submission forms, status centers, and powerful databases with full ad hoc query capabilities that are described below:

- **Requisitioning** - An on-line requisition system was developed to allow the FMS customer to enter requests for all types of requisitions, stock numbered, part numbered, and publications, as well as follow-ups, cancellations, and modifiers. Only authorized customers with valid user identifications and passwords are allowed access, and the system will only allow submission for the authorized country. The system includes a feedback mechanism through e-mail notification of receipt. An on-line help page was incorporated listing each field, its use, and proper entries. A batch upload feature was added to enhance the customer's ability to submit mass requisitions.

- Supply Discrepancy Reports (SDR) - This was the first eBusiness application developed for the web. This form allows electronic submission of SDRs to an Oracle database. This submission database works in conjunction with the SDR database to reduce manual entry of data and ensure validation of entries. The system reduces keystrokes and errors on the part of SDR personnel and significantly speeds entry into the system. A feedback mechanism, similar to requisitions was created, and an e-mail is sent to the customer confirming receipt. A help page is available to guide the customer through each field. The SDR status center allows the FMS customer to view the status of individual SDRs. The customer enters the SDR number in order to retrieve the current status of the SDR with all pertinent information. On-line SDR reports and results of investigation are available for both the FMS customer and the supply activities holding the SDR. These online reports have resulted in a reduction of 108 work-days of effort.

- Quality Deficiency Reports (QDR) - At the direction of the NAVAIR/NAVSUP international logistics enterprise team (ILET), a QDR form was developed to improve and supplement the SDR process. Numerous FMS customers requested that QDRs be incorporated into the SDR system to ensure that all necessary information was available to make an appropriate decision. The QDR form, developed by combining the SDR (SF 364), and QDR (SF 368) forms into one form has the benefit of the FMS customer submitting one form, while the system prints two forms, thus reducing data entry. A help screen was incorporated to guide the user through the fields. This system was created to ensure that the FMS SDR/QDR is not treated as a one-time problem but rather, as a potential system problem. This processing ensures that potential systemic problems are identified and appropriate action taken, both for the FMS customer, and in the U. S. system. An adjunct system to ensure full visibility for the FMS customer of discrepant items was developed and displays discrepant material summaries by month.

- FMS Initial Support Tracker (FIST) - The NAVAIR/NAVSUP ILET developed the FIST tracking system to track spares, publications, and support equipment from identification to initial operating capability (IOC). This application is in two parts. The main application is included in the information warehouse suite of applications, while the add and update system is contained in the eBusiness Suite. Queries, presentation of data, and reports are available in the information warehouse application, segregated by country and case. This allows FMS customers, program managers, and assistant program managers for logistics (APMLs) full visibility of their programs and status. The eBusiness Suite application allows logistics element managers and APMLs to update existing data and enter new items to the system.

- Excess Defense Articles - This database allows the FMS customer to browse through items excess to Inventory Control Point system stocks that are being made available to the FMS customer. The customer can browse by surface or aircraft systems and can narrow searches by cognizance symbol, allowance parts list, aircraft type, and other categories. The system includes the national stock number, quantities available, original and reduced prices, units of issue, and nomenclature.

- Information Warehouse - The management information system for international logistics information warehouse is a powerful internet database application that allows the FMS customer full access to requisition and financial information. The user can define ad hoc queries to return a broad range of data, or selected specific data. Predefined or custom reports are available as well as a download capability that allows the user the ability to import data to other applications. Information available includes requisition, financial, case, SDRs, and FIST.

- Joint Total Asset Visibility - Under the eBusiness umbrella, various sites have been linked to allow the FMS customer and FMS country manager to find material with a minimum of effort. This information includes Global Transportation Network, Defense Logistics Agency, NAVICP, Defense Reutilization Marketing Office, NAVAIR, and other information sources.

- Commercial Applications - Two applications have been developed to allow FMS customers visibility to requisitions that have been passed to the commercial sector. These are FMS hybrid and the fastline buying service.

- Tailored Repairables Item List (TRIL) - This application gives online access to pre-approved repairable items under the repair of repairables program. This gives the customer real-time access to items in the program as well as current repair depots and addresses.

The Future

eBusiness development, particularly as it relates to FMS, is a new and exciting field providing FMS customers unprecedented visibility and access to their programs. FMS eBusiness will expand in the years ahead to comply with a true paperless environment while providing improved customer service and viability of the FMS system. Additionally, servers and operating systems are being upgraded to take full advantage of the capabilities of the internet. To reduce customer costs, access is available to FMS customers without the need for any special hardware or software; only a personal computer, an internet browser, and an internet service provider are required to take full advantage of these processes. In a competitive environment, access to information and improved business processes are required to maintain and increase the FMS customer base. In response to this need, a significant number of new applications are scheduled for development and deployment over the next year. These applications include a repair of repairables database, market pricing of material, online case reconciliation reviews, online metrics, a customer requisition management system, and an online ad hoc query system, as well as other customer and employee productivity enhancing applications. Further, current applications will be upgraded to provide additional detailed information and an improved customer interface. NAVICP's International Programs Directorate's goal is to provide the FMS customer with a completely electronic environment in time to satisfy the DoD electronic commerce/electronic business (EC/EB) strategic plan. During the next year, significant strides will be made to accomplish this goal.

About the Author

Ken Kittredge has over twelve years of experience in the foreign military sales community and five years experience with internet technologies. He retired from the Navy in 1997 and has worked for Information Network Systems at NAVICP Philadelphia in foreign military sales since then.